

**A WORD BY LORD MAYOR NJONG FONYUY DONATUS, OF KUMBO MUNICIPALITY- CAMEROON DURING THE INAUGURATION OF THE CAMEROON GARDEN IN LA CROSSE TODAY, 10<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2019**

- *THE LORD MAYOR TIM KABAT CITY OF LACROSSE-WISCONSIN*
- *LA CROSSE FRIENDS OF CAMEROON*
- *THE KUMBO COMMUNITY IN LA CROSSE*
- *THE CAMEROONIAN COMMUNITY IN LA CROSSE*
- *GUESTS/INVITEES*
- *DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN*

Today I feel so elated to say a word during the inauguration of the Cameroon Garden in La Crosse which is so significant to the sister city relationship that exists between the cities of Kumbo and La Crosse. We regret not being physically present during this very important event. You are all aware of the crisis we are going through and due to certain exigencies we cannot be absent from home during this period.

The fraternity bonds that unite us date back more than five years ago and it is surely and solidly moving on. The History of the twinning agreement between La Crosse and Kumbo is, before anything else, a story of sisterhood that saw the light of day thanks to the involvement of many persons and institutions. Here we are thinking of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis Shisong, the Tertiary Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Ms Diane Withers, Dr Lee, La Crosse Friends of Cameroon, the Rotary Club of La Crosse, and the International Friendship Garden etc.

The celebration we are having today is so symbolic to our sister city relationship. Gardens are wonderfully peaceful places and they often symbolize a sense of cooperation or even co-dependence. We all know a great garden does not just happen overnight, it takes time, energy and often some frustration as well. This symbolizes patience, reassurance, and when your plants finally grow, satisfaction. Even in Heaven, there is the Garden of Eden. Let me seize this opportunity to thank those who envisioned the idea and made it a reality, so that the past, present and future between our two cities will always remain green.

The twinning agreement that we signed in 2015 considered as one of its main goals, the mutual interest to both cities to promote greater social, cultural and educational exchanges. Our agreement has continued to thrive, with several chapters and various episodes, and mutual visits to our cities. We had so many other things planned but due to reasons best known to all of us a lot of things have slowed down. I would like to take this moment to express my special gratitude to Mayor Tim Kabat

and the La Crosse Friends of Cameroon for their role and support to us during the crisis plaguing the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon in which Kumbo is adversely affected. Thank you Mayor Tim Kabat for the Town Hall Meeting on our behalf, attended amongst others by the La Crosse Representative in Congress. That eventually caused the high level US Congress visit to Cameroon. This intervention contributed in pressurizing President Paul Biya to convene a National Dialogue on the Anglophone Crisis for the end of September 2019. We hope and pray that the crisis will come to an end and things will come back to normalcy. We are very grateful to our City of La Crosse.

Let us continue to look for ways to nurture our partnership, anticipating where we can best cooperate with each other given the present situation in Cameroon, so that our relationship continues to be of mutual benefit to our two cities.

It is with great honor that I address you today, fulfilling my role in our beautiful history. Permit me to express our deepest respect and fondness for you all for being here today and for your very blessed support and goodwill. The city of La Crosse and her people will remain in our minds as our true friends and beloved sister city.

*Thank you*